

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 0849

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: U.S.-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS: VENEZUELAN REACTION TO U.S. TRADE ACT

REF: CARACAS 0820 AND 0828

1. THE CARACAS VERNACULAR PRESS HAS PUBLISHED AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE NATIONALISTIC ORGANIZATION PRO VENEZUELA TITLED IN BOLD HEADLINES

"IN THE FACE OF FOREIGN AGGRESSION TOWARD THIS COUNTRY." THE FIRST PARAGRAPH IS SUFFICIENT TO QUOTE HERE, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SENT THE FULL TEXT (CARACAS 0828) BY IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM.

QUOTE. THE PRO VENEZUELA ASSOCIATION HAS INVITED ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, WHO JOINTLY SUBSCRIBE TO THIS DOCUMENT, TO DISCUSS THE GRAVE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION. THIS SITUATION IS PROVOKED AND PROMOTED BY THE EXCALATION OF AGGRESSION AND SERIOUS THREATS MADE BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S OPENLY INTERVENTIONIST POLICY, DIRECTED AGAINST COUNTRIES THAT EXPORT RAW MATERIALS, AND SPECIFICALLY, AGAINST THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE OPEP. UNQUOTE

2. I DECIDED TO QUERY THE SECRETARIES GENERAL OF THE TWO LARGEST PARTIES AS TO WHETHER IN FACT, AS CLAIMED, ACCION DEMOCRATICA AND COPEI WERE ASSOCIATED IN THIS OUTRAGEOUS BLAST AGAINST THE UNITED STATES. WHEN I CALLED OCTAVIO LEPAGE, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AD
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PARTY, HE CLAIMED NOT TO HAVE READ THE PRO VENEZUELA OPEN LETTER BUT

DID SAY THAT AD HAD BEEN REPRESENTED AT A RECENT MEETING WITH THE DIRECTORATE OF PRO VENEZUELA AT WHICH TIME A DOCUMENT COUCHED APPARENTLY ALONG THE LINES OF THE OPEN LETTER WAS IN FACT APPROVED. WHEN I CALLED PEDRO PABLO AGUILAR, SECRETARY GENERAL OF COPEI, HE MADE A SIMILAR REPLY BUT CONFESSED THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE TEXT OF THE PRO VENEZUELA STATEMENT. NEITHER SECRETARY GENERAL WOULD GIVE ME A STRAIGHT ANSWER AS TO WHETHER OR NOT IN FACT HIS PARTY WAS FULLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRO VENEZUELA ANTI-AMERICAN MANIFESTO BUT PROMISED TO CALL ME BACK. I AM SURE THEY WILL BE IN IMMEDIATE CONSULTA-

TION WITH THEIR SUPERIORS, INCLUDING ON THE COPEI SIDE CALDERA, CALVANI

AND GODOFREDO GONZALEZ; AND ON THE AD SIDE PRESIDENT PEREZ, POSSIBLY FONMIN SCHACHT AND MOST CERTAINLY PARTY PRESIDENT GONZALO BARRIOS PLUS EX-PRESIDENT ROMULO BETANCOURT. I THINK IT PROBABLE THAT THE HIGHER COUNCILS IN EACH PARTY WILL CONTRIVE SOME WAY TO DISSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM THE PRO VENEZUELA PUBLIC LETTER WITHOUT AT THE SAME TIME--FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL PURPOSES--DISSOCIATING THEMSELVES AT LEAST IN PRIVATE FROM WHAT THEY AGREED TO AT THE RECENT PRO VENEZUELA MEETING.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, OUR CAUSE IS NOT MUCH HELPED BY REITERATED REPORTS VIA THE WIRE SERVICES THAT OUR REPRESENTATIVE AT THE TWO-DAY MEETING OF OAS TO HEAR PROTESTS AGAINST THE TRADE ACT HAS INDICATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT REPEAT NO INTENTION OF SEEKING A REVISION OF THAT LEGISLATION. OUR REPRESENTATIVE FORD IS NOWHERE CITED IN THE PRESS AS INDICATING EVEN ANY WILLINGNESS OF THE ADMINISTRATION TO CONTEMPLATE A REVISION OF THE LAW. HOWEVER, UNIVERSAL THIS MORNING DOES CARRY USIS STORY CITED PARA FOUR CARACAS 0820.

4. MEANWHILE, THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF CONTINUES TO SHOW THE MOST WARM PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP TOWARD ME, SUCH AS ASKING ME TO FIX A DATE FOR A FAREWELL BANQUET AT LA CASONA. PROMINENT VENEZUELAN, DESPITE THE STRIDENT TONE OF SUCH THINGS AS THE PRO VENEZUELA OPEN LETTER, ARE SEEKING AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER PARADOXICAL IT MAY SEEM, TO ASSURE US OF PROFOUND FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES. THE REACTION OF THE MILITARY AND SUCH A POWERFUL GROUP AS FEDECAMARAS WILL PROBABLY BE ADVERSE TO PRO VENEZUELA.

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5. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I RECOMMEND THAT WE DO NOT DIGNIFY THE PRO VENEZUELA OPEN LETTER WITH A REJOINDER BUT THAT WE MAINTAIN AN ABSOLUTE PUBLIC SILENCE. I AM ENDEAVORING TO ASCERTAIN IF IN FACT THE PRO VENEZUELA MANIFESTO HAS BEEN CARRIED BY THE WIRE SERVICES TO THE UNITED STATES, HAVING IN MIND THAT IT MAY, IF PUBLISHED, PROVOKE AN UNFAVORABLE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION. HOWEVER, I THINK THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO CALL IN BURELLI RIVAS AND ASK IF IN FACT THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES OF VENEZUELA, OR ITS GOVERNMENT,

STAND BEHIND SUCH A DIATRIBE AGAINST A FRIENDLY COUNTRY.
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